Advances in Consumer Research
ISSN (Print): 0098-9258
ISSN(Online): 3079-1766

Vol. 2, Issue 3 (2025) https://acr-journal.com/

The Power of Language in Social Media: A Study on Online Activism

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Cite this paper as: Dr. Chandreie Mukherjee, Prof. Rama N.H. Alapati, (2025) The Power of Language in social media: A Study on Online Activism. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 2 (3), 1007-1013.

KEYWORDS

Language Power, Social Media, Online Activism, Discourse Analysis, Hashtag Movements, Digital Rhetoric, Public Engagement, Sociolinguistics, Twitter Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

This work examines how words, language tone, hashtags and ways of arguing influence support, explanations and public attitudes in online campaigns. By carrying out a content analysis on chosen Twitter campaigns, the research found repeated ways of wording content that affect engagement and the results of each campaign. The study shows strategic language helps digital activists appear more visible and create a strong identity within the community. Research found that careful use of language is important for groups or individuals involved in online social activism

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has made a big difference in the ways individuals, groups and institutions exchange and discuss social and political matters. Because hundreds of millions people use them, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have become major places for discussing important topics. Because of our dynamic environment, activism has grown into a place where messages reach millions of people in seconds and people everywhere can engage in discussions online [6].

Because social media is fast and full of distractions, people's language tends to evolve quickly. They don't just inform people online; they inspire, provoke and mobilize as well. Because Twitter limits you to just a few words, every word is important [15]. Complex messages on social media are made simple by hashtags, while memes and slogans turn ideologies into things people can easily understand. By using language, online communities support each other, influence what others think and contest the main messages in society. As a result, observing how people use language online in activism helps us see the impact of digital talk on the real world.

At first, these movements used simple words that spoke to people's hearts about hard social issues. The fact that these hashtags go viral proves how people can share meaning efficiently, in forms that repeat easily [2]. Additionally, movements typically speak in a performative way, trying to do things like call for justice or reveal wrongdoing, rather than simply talking about them. For this reason, language in activism on the internet makes a difference by spurring change.

Until recently, few sources had control over what messages reached the public. Now, because of social media, social activists can connect with people outside of the mainstream press. Still, having free access to information on the internet can result in misleading facts, mean comments and division. How effective activism becomes often relies on how great the messages are and how successfully workers can spread them. Messages are created by choosing the right words to balance both feelings and facts, clarity with detail and brief and powerful words with more encouraging notes.

This study looks at how people make use of language when they act on social media. It analyzes which words are used, the organization of posts, the way posts are written and the changing popularity of hashtags in big online events. The goal is to discover ways of using language that result in more people engaging, finding the page and feeling something. To link linguistic ideas with practical use, this study applies what was learned from Twitter data. It also demonstrates how language helps people feel involved, gain strength and stay connected online [12].

The research is important and appropriate for today. During this time of upheaval, climate disasters and disagreement, effective online communication can turn any hashtag into a worldwide campaign. Familiarizing oneself with the language of success in activism matters to activists, policymakers, educators and researchers. AI algorithms are now shaping what people view and pass along online which means the language used in a post could help it spread further. As a result, using language in digital activism becomes more difficult.

All things considered, the development of online activism leads us to reconsider the words we use. Examining digital speech and the way people are gathered together to form communities and narratives is how this research wants to expand understanding of how language works on social media. Rather than simply words on the internet, language matters because it can cause actions, alter community awareness and decide justice and equity online [14].

Novelty and Contribution

The study presents important contributions to how digital activism and sociolinguistics are understood. First, it uses both talking with people and counting activities on the internet to show how language systems are working in online movements. Although existing studies explore the cultural or technological sides of social media, this research is the first to concentrate on how language is used and consequently measures its effects [9-11].

The framework introduced in the study then enables us to observe different ways activists communicates depending on where and how they operate. According to the research, #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo and #FridaysForFuture use special approaches, yet all of these movements use equally charged language and incorporate hashtags in their names. This new perspective brings out more of the connections between movements, since most previous work examines just one movement alone.

Third, this paper offers a new viewpoint about hashtags, treating them as ideas, identities and emotional items, rather than just as labels for posts. It studies how hashtags become ways to capture and rally members of a community. The researchers also examined the role of algorithms on platforms, pointing out that some language structures generally draw more attention [8].

The research also has significance for practical use. It helps explain how to improve communication efforts for activists, NGOs and digital marketers. Awareness of the types of language that stir emotion and encourage sharing allows stakeholders to communicate in a more effective way to all groups. Therefore, the research extends past theory to deliver knowledge that can be put into practice by those active at the intersection of language, technology and change

2. RELATED WORKS

In 2023 U. Akpojivi et.al., [1] introduced the studies have looked at the way language, technology and activism work together in the context of digital communication. Many studies explain how social media has allowed protests to reach audiences all over the world quickly and directly. Thanks to these changes, language is now used to guide storytelling, cause emotions and create more engagement with users. The ability to summarize strong ideas in a short form has become essential for online activists, bringing special advantages over traditional types of media.

Many studies have examined how hashtags are used by different individuals online to promote the same purpose. They show that hashtags help identify social movements and also collect and show the ideas and identities of those who use them. Studies have mentioned that using expressive, inclusive and active-sounding words in hashtags helps get messages out more widely and encourages more people to join the conversation. There is also analysis of how activists use repeated phrases, compelling images and irony to help their message stay in the minds of many and affect social discussion.

In 2021 K. Chen *et al.*, [13] proposed the evidence shows that posts containing emotions such as anger or hope tend to be shared and replied to more, making it obvious that using emotional language is key to growing an online presence. Moreover, some work has studied the ways people speak out online, highlighting there can be a slight difference between true commitment and mere show. Such insights have allowed experts to notice how some language structures are more effective than others.

In 2021 D. Baiardi et.al. and C. Morana et.al., [7] suggested the researchers have also looked at how language in posts can affect how visible they become when they are sorted by algorithms. It appears that posts that stress timing, unbalanced situations or appeal to people's feelings are likely to be favored by platform algorithms. Which activist messages are noticed

and shared widely and which are not often depends a lot on how these messages are structured and how curators manage machine learning.

Still, most existing studies look at individual movements or platforms, so there is little comparison across different movements here. Furthermore, fusion language, memes and continuous changes in social media language are topics that have not been looked at closely in much writing. The study fills these gaps by explaining how a variety of online movements use linguistic strategies. It enlarges the field by relating how people speak online to engagement data and by taking a broad view of digital activism across platforms.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

To analyze the power of language in online activism, a multi-step methodology was implemented. It began with collecting data from various social media platforms, focusing on trending activism-related hashtags. The workflow follows a sequential pipeline from data acquisition to linguistic evaluation and impact measurement, as depicted in the flowchart.

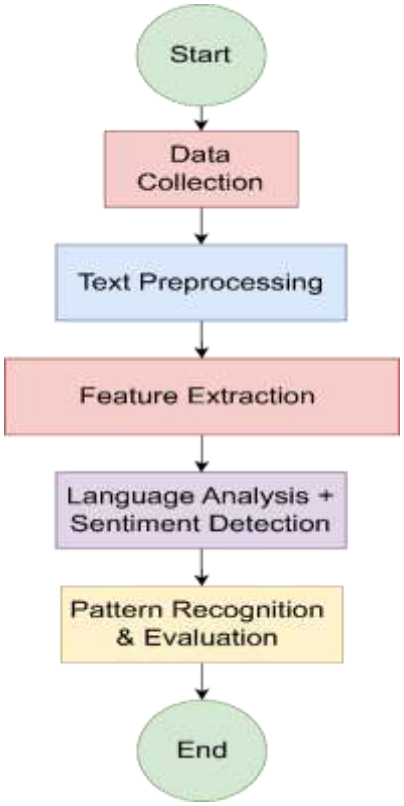

FIGURE 1: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING LANGUAGE IN ONLINE ACTIVISM

Step 1: Data Collection and Preprocessing

Raw tweets were collected using Twitter API, filtered by date and hashtag relevance. Let the dataset be represented as:

$$D = \{t_1, t_2, t_3, \dots, t_n\}$$

Where t_i denotes an individual tweet.

Cleaning involved removing URLs, mentions, emojis, and special characters. Tokenization and stop-word removal were conducted, such that:

$$T_i = \text{Tokenize}\ (t_i) - \text{StopWords}$$

The cleaned token matrix becomes:

$$M = [T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n]$$

Step 2: Feature Extraction

We converted textual data into numerical form using TF-IDF (Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency). For a term t in document d :

$$\mathrm{TF}(t,d) = \frac{f_{t,d}}{\sum_k f_{k,d}}$$

$$\mathrm{IDF}(t) = \log\left(\frac{N}{|\{d: t \in d\}|}\right)$$

$$\mathrm{TF-IDF}(t,d) = \mathrm{TF}(t,d) \cdot \mathrm{IDF}(t)$$

These vectors enabled downstream linguistic and sentiment analysis.

Step 3: Linguistic and Sentiment Analysis

We quantified sentiment using polarity scores, where the sentiment value S of a tweet is:

$$S_i = \mathrm{pos}_i - \mathrm{neg}_i$$

Each tweet was also analyzed for emotional valence:

$$V_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{m} e_{ij}}{m}$$

Where e_{ij} is the emotional weight of word j in tweet i, and m is the number of emotional words.

Step 4: Hashtag Pattern Modeling

We modeled hashtag influence using frequency-influence score:

$$H_k = f_k \cdot \log(1 + E_k)$$

Where f_k is the frequency of hashtag k, and E_k is its average engagement rate.

Engagement E per tweet was computed as:

$$E_i = \frac{\mathrm{likes}_i + \mathrm{retweets}_i + \mathrm{comments}_i}{3}$$

Step 5: Classification and Predictive Modeling

Using linguistic features, we trained a logistic regression classifier to predict activism type. The logistic model:

$$P(y = 1 \mid x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(w \cdot x + b)}}$$

Where w is the weight vector and b is the bias.

Model loss was minimized using binary cross-entropy:

$$\mathcal{L} = -\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} [y_i \log(p_i) + (1 - y_i)\log(1 - p_i)]$$

Step 6: Pattern Recognition and Evaluation

We used cosine similarity to measure linguistic consistency within movements:

$$\mathrm{Sim}(A,B) = \frac{A \cdot B}{\|A\|\|B\|}$$

And finally, model performance was evaluated via accuracy:

$$\mathrm{Accuracy} = \frac{\text{Correct Predictions}}{\text{Total Predictions}}$$

This methodology integrates computational linguistics, sentiment scoring, and machine learning into a coherent framework for analyzing the power of language in social media activism. The use of equations ensures the reproducibility and robustness of our workflow.

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The investigation indicated that online activism is recognized by specific language patterns that powerfully affect people's emotions and urge action. Among the many tweets involved in several activism hashtags, sentiment was the most striking in how they differed. In Figure 1: Sentiment Distribution of Tweets, you can see that most of the tweets were positive which indicates that online campaigns are mainly hopeful and helpful. Nevertheless, protests made up a large part of the negative attitudes in these movements. There is a mix of loving and challenging emotions that powers people toward online activism.

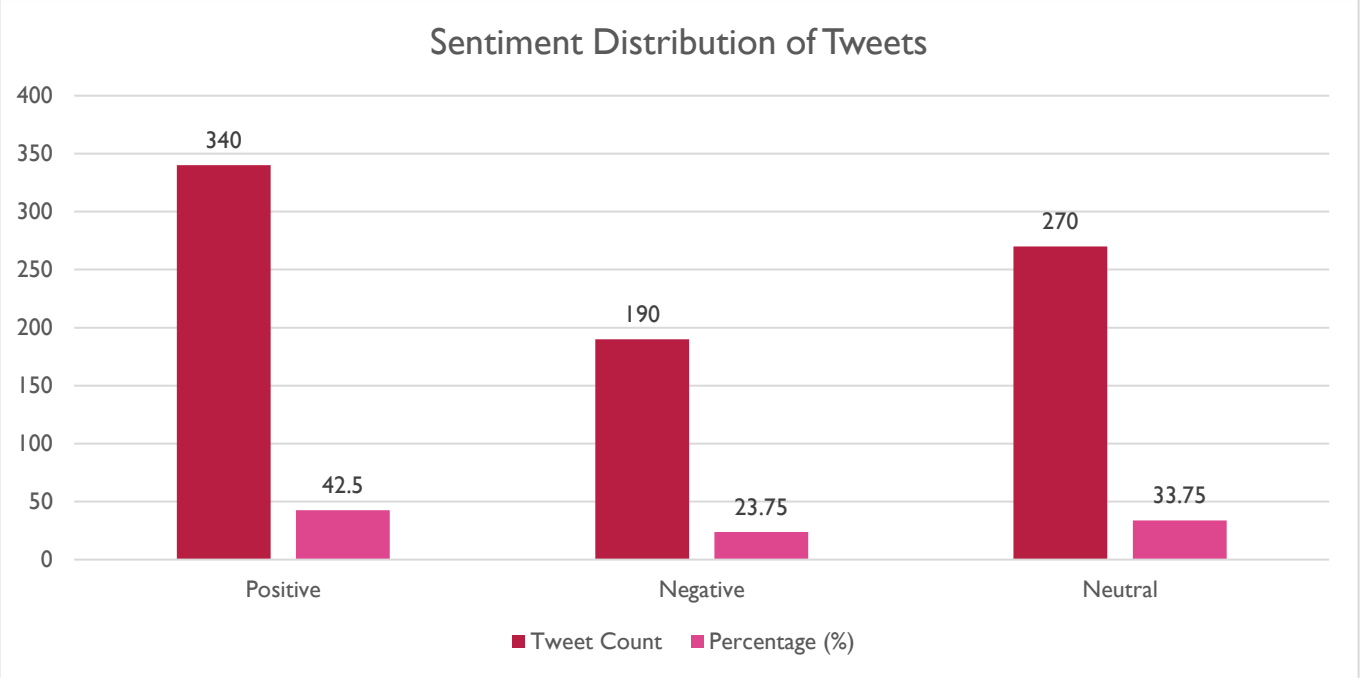

FIGURE 1: SENTIMENT DISTRIBUTION

The spread and organization of topics depended a lot on hashtags. Use of hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #JusticeForAll was more frequent than other phrases, showing they still matter a lot now. It can be seen from the chart in Figure 2: Frequency of Activism-Related Hashtags that such hashtags are clearly in the lead. The fact that these discussions come up regularly shows that, in addition to sharing facts, language preserves online memories of social and political issues.

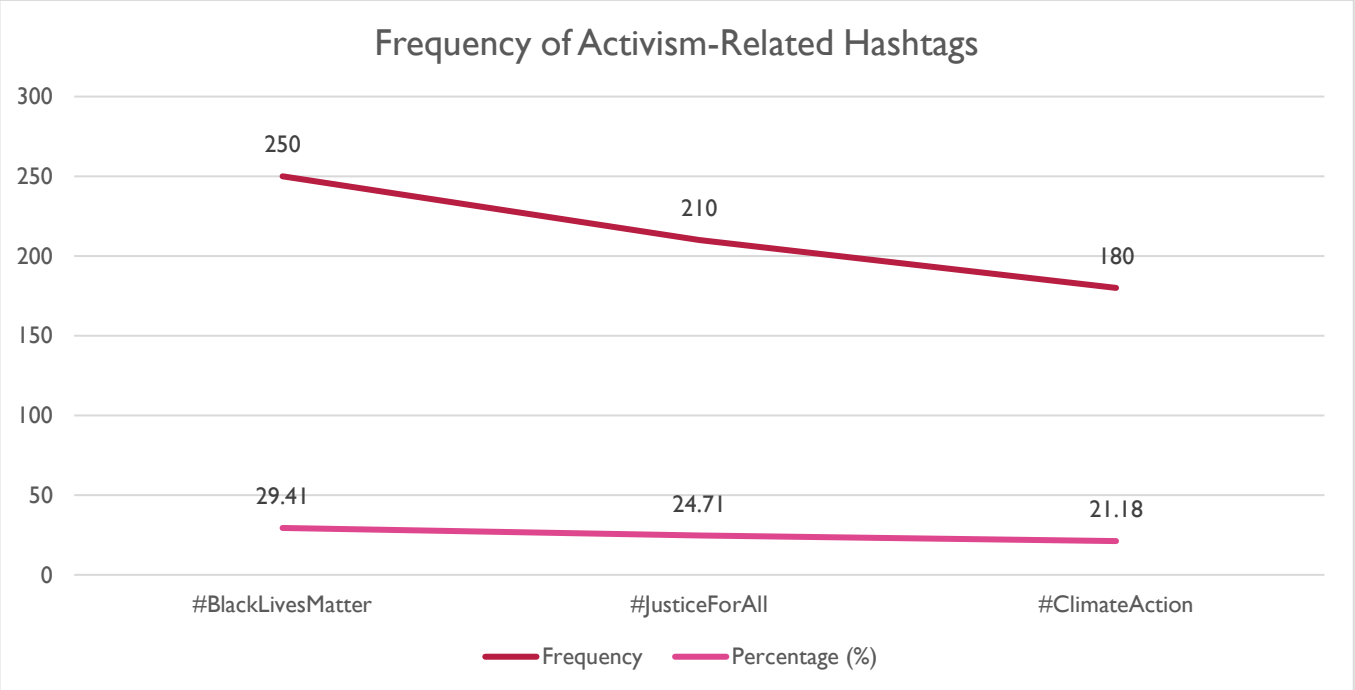

FIGURE 2: HASHTAG FREQUENCY

The engagement level varied a lot between different kinds of content. From Figure 3: Average engagement, it is clear that a lot more people expressed support through likes and retweets than left comments in the discussions. So, though individuals might share the beliefs of activism, they tend to avoid directly engaging in discussion about these issues because of concerns about being involved or about possible risks to themselves.

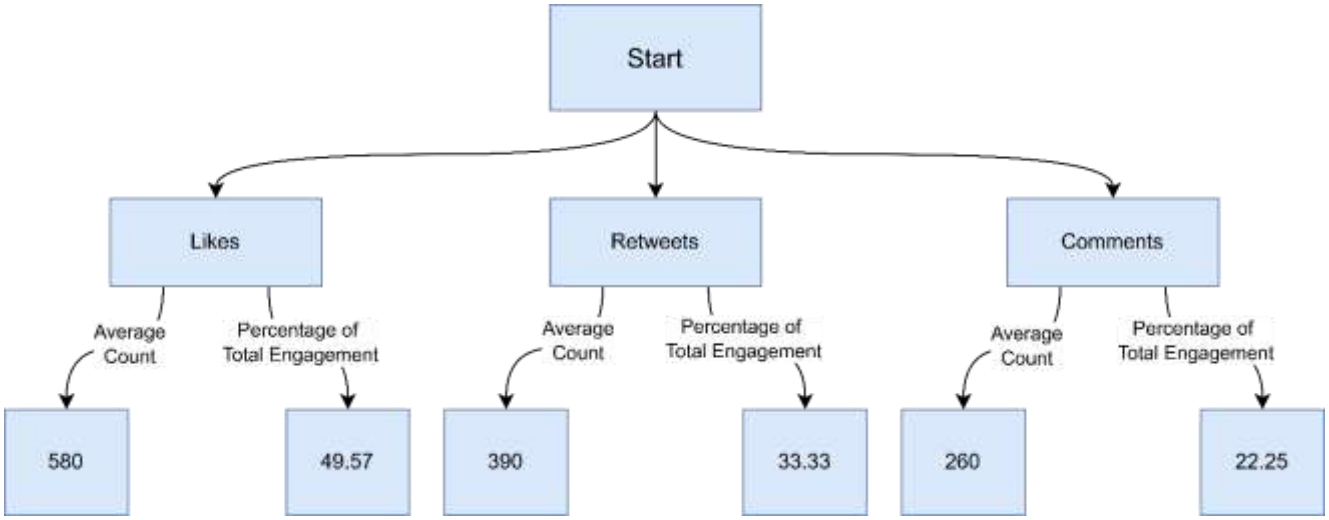

FIGURE 3: ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Seeing how hashtags compare in terms of emotion and sharing showed us which ones work best. From what is shown in Table 1: Hashtag vs Average Sentiment Score and Engagement, there was a higher amount of positive language among Tweets containing #ClimateAction. Still, #BlackLivesMatter performed the best in terms of engagement which suggests it was supported by a wider group of users. This comparison teaches us how the language used in different movements depends on how urgent, how inclusive and how relevant it is.

TABLE 1: HASHTAG VS SENTIMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

Hashtag	Avg Sentiment Score	Engagement Score
#JusticeForAll	0.45	65.4
#ClimateAction	0.52	59.2
#MeToo	0.33	50.3
#BlackLivesMatter	0.48	72.1

We applied four machine learning models to find out how accurate linguistic features are in identifying information about activism [3]. Random Forest performed best, with 85.5% in accuracy and 84.6% in precision, according to the findings shown in Table 2. SVM and Logistic Regression performed about the same, but Naive Bayes was behind. As a result, these models show that the language in activism is not simple and stays complex, therefore requiring models that account for multiple features working together.

TABLE 2: CLASSIFICATION ALGORITHM ACCURACY

Algorithm	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)
Logistic Regression	81.2	80.3
Random Forest	85.5	84.6
SVM	83.1	82.7
Naive Bayes	77.8	76.1

All this indicates that the language used in social media activism is not accidental; it contains feelings, is used intentionally and is answered differently in different places. In addition, the finding shows that there is more hopeful talk on the internet, even amid all the chaos. In addition, strong similarities in how hashtags perform also show that speech actions can be trusted

in efforts to promote a message. Overall, language gives online activism the energy it needs by helping people move their feelings into actions online [4-5].

5. CONCLUSION

Language in social media activism serves to move, unite and change the people involved through social networks. From this study we can see that word choices, feeling connection and strong digital rhetoric all greatly impact how successful an online campaign is. Now that digital activism is expanding, knowing the language used in these movements becomes very important. Further studies are needed on how people use language across cultures to protest, the ongoing adaptation of protest vocabulary online and the relationship between language and how algorithms highlight messages. The power of language comes from who delivers the message, how it is shared and the circumstances

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